

## TENNESSEAN OP-ED: BILL WILL BUILD STRONGER, HEALTHIER AMERICA

March 23, 2010

I've had cancer. The really bad kind. The kind that killed my father. I am thankful to God and to Nashville doctors and hospitals for giving me a new lease on life.

When you think about your own health care, isn't your first thought about your doctor and hospital? Physicians and nurses you trust. The hospital you have chosen.

Did you know that every single Nashville hospital supported the health reform bill that Congress just passed? That means Saint Thomas, Vanderbilt, Centennial, Meharry Medical Center, Nashville General, Summit, Skyline and Southern Hills. These hospitals disagree on many issues, but they agree that this is a good bill.

It's harder to get a read on how local physicians and nurses feel, but the majority of those who contacted my office favor the legislation. Their largest national organizations — the folks that doctors and nurses have hired to read the legislation — strongly favor the health reform bill. That has never happened before.

Even on the troubling issue of abortion, 59,000 Catholic sisters and all Catholic hospitals support the legislation. That is a historic level of support for health reform.

It's no secret that health insurance companies opposed reform. These are the corporations that trap hard-working people like you with high premiums, poor coverage and fine print.

For example, a lady with breast cancer was recently denied care because her insurance company discovered that she had acne as a teenager. Her insurance policy turned out to be a legal fraud.

A local businesswoman was sold a cheap "high-deductible" policy. Then her heart failed. She needs a transplant. Her policy will cover the operation but not the life-saving medications she will need after the transplant. Because of the fine print, she can't even get on the waiting list for a new heart. Her insurance policy has become a death sentence.

I want to protect your family from these insurance nightmares. I want you to be able to live longer.

You wouldn't think that wishing people well would be controversial. It should be like supporting motherhood and apple pie. But in today's super-heated media you can make almost anything look bad. Take a deep breath, count to 10 and remember that, going back to the Declaration of Independence, our founders championed "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Without good health, you can't have any of these.

Of course, the founders did not have good medical care or insurance. But now we do. I believe that the founders would want us to live up to our God-given potential. In today's world, that means good health insurance.

Helping more people get health insurance is estimated to save 18,000 to 45,000 lives a year. That's really big. That's like stopping fatal car wrecks or finding a cure for certain types of cancer.

I am saddened that our nation is involved in a political dispute that involves partisanship, ambition and money. The real issue is access to medical care for average American families without busting anyone's budget. The bill that the president will sign into law this week achieves that goal.

I  
voted for health reform because healthier families mean a stronger,

better America.